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20 September 1966

MAHON BRIEFING

VIETNAM

SOUTH VIETNAMESE ELECTIONS

- I. The last time we met, the South Vietnamese elections were still a month away, and we were thinking in terms of a 60-percent voter turnout as a fair indication of the beginnings of public commitment.
- II. Since then, the question of the size of the vote became the major issue in the elections.
 - A. The Viet Cong made it clear that they were out to disrupt the balloting.
 - B. The more militant members of the Buddhist hierarchy called on their followers to boycott it.
 - C. You have seen the results. More than 80 percent of the registered voters turned out on September 11.
 1. Registration---5,289,000---was up 12 percent from previous lists.

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III. The result was a kick in the teeth, both for the Viet Cong and for the Buddhist militants.

A. Premier Ky and other government leaders mounted a thorough and effective drive to get out the vote.

B. Extraordinary security precautions, together with good intelligence reporting on Viet Cong plans, stopped any major Communist efforts to disrupt the voting.

1. Terrorism was well above the normal level, but had no significant impact.

C. There was no evidence of government favoritism for any particular candidates. The consensus of foreign observers is that the election was honest.

IV. The election has thus demonstrated the administrative ability of the government, dealt a sharp blow to Viet Cong prestige, and got South Vietnam's evolution toward representative government off to a good start.

A. The election result should not be viewed as a popularity contest between the government and the Viet Cong, but rather as an effective demonstration of the government's administrative and security apparatus.

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- B. The failure of the Viet Cong antielection campaign revealed their overall weakness in government-controlled areas when confronted by a well-coordinated and purposeful government program.
- C. The elected assembly is made up of local favorite sons and a few well-known politicians.
 - 1. It will begin drafting a constitution next week.
 - 2. The voter turnout gives it a relatively significant popular mandate, but there are of course many obstacles to be overcome before we can expect a representative, effective, government.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

- I. Since I last briefed you on US operations in the area of the Demilitarized Zone, there have been very few significant encounters with the enemy.
 - A. You may remember that Operation HASTINGS in July killed more than 880 enemy soldiers

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by actual body count. It forced the North Vietnamese 324th Division back from Quang Tri Province into the Demilitarized Zone and North Vietnam.

B. Since early August there have been indications that this 9,000-man division is again concentrating in and immediately south of the Demilitarized Zone for another attempt to launch an offensive.

1. There are also indications that additional combat forces are infiltrating into this area. Elements of an unidentified North Vietnamese division were detected moving south in August. They may have already reached the DMZ area.
2. This latest buildup has been accompanied by an intensive logistics effort which includes the nightly movement of military cargoes by junk or other watercraft along the North Vietnamese coast to the border area. From there, the materiel goes by truck to locations within or near the DMZ.

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C. In an effort to counter this enemy buildup, US forces have launched a new spoiling operation--code-named PRAIRIE--and have greatly intensified air strikes in this area.

1. US activity has been successful in keeping the enemy off balance and has sharply curtailed his ability to launch any large-scale operation in the next month or so. PRAIRIE has already inflicted more than 500 enemy casualties.

D. Despite the relative success of US operations in recent weeks, the enemy buildup in Quang Tri Province and southern North Vietnam poses a considerable threat.

1. It is clearly one of the most important military developments now taking place in the war.
2. The North Vietnamese have effectively extended their territorial control through the Demilitarized Zone into northern South Vietnam.

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3. This offers them a number of military advantages, such as a more secure logistics and infiltration corridor and the ability to counter any significant US and South Vietnamese attempts to choke off infiltration by ground action.

II. We have obtained more and more evidence in recent months of the extent to which Hanoi is running--and taking part in--the war in South Vietnam.

A. Captured documents and the interrogation of prisoners have now identified the man who is running the entire Communist war effort in South Vietnam. He is Nguyen Chi Thanh, (NNGWEEN CHEE TAHN) a politburo member of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.

1. Thanh is a general in the North Vietnamese Army, and has been its political commissar. He left North Vietnam to take over operations in the South early in 1965.

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2. His two principal deputies are also both generals in the North Vietnamese Army, and members of the central committee of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.
 3. One of them, the military deputy, is Tran Van Tra, who used to be deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army. Now, under the alias of Tran Nam Trung, he is listed as chief of the Military Affairs Committee of the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.
 4. The deputy who runs the Communist political organization in South Vietnam is General Tran Do.
- B. That is a good sample of how little identification the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam actually has with the people of South Vietnam.

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20 September 1966

MAHON BRIEFING

COMMUNIST CHINA

- I. The internal political scene in Communist China has been marked by turmoil and disarray for many months now. All of the indications are that the situation is still unstable, and there may be further upheavals.
 - A. For the past month, mobs of rampaging teenagers of the so-called Red Guard have kept the country in a state of disorder
 1. They have been roaming the streets of all major Chinese cities, harassing suspected enemies of the regime and occasionally beating them up.
 2. There have been a few reports of extensive violence and bloodshed, but for the most part the Red Guards appear to be a disciplined and well-controlled organization.
 3. In the past week or so, their activities have subsided somewhat.
 - B. The destructive antics of these teenagers have tended to divert public attention from far more important developments

S E C R E T

within the party leadership. It appears to us that the top power structure of the party is undergoing its most massive shake-up in the history of the Chinese Communist regime.

(BRIEFING BOARD, CHICOM LEADERSHIP)

II. Last month, massive demonstrations in Peking on the 18th and 31st of August featured what appears to be a new line-up of the party's top policy-making body, the politburo.

A. Mao Tse-tung still dominates the leadership, but Defense Minister Lin Piao has taken the place of Mao's long-time deputy, Liu Shao-chi.

1. Liu has been the titular chief of state. There has been no announcement that he has lost that position, and he is still a member of the politburo, but he has been dropped ignominiously from second to eighth place.

B. As for Mao himself, we are not sure just how much control he still exercises over day-to-day events, or how long he will last.

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- III. Mao's new deputy, Lin Piao, is not in much better health.
- A. Lin is one of the youngest men in the polit-buro at 59, but he has been ill for much of the past 30 years, probably with tuberculosis.
1. Our medical experts believe that the tuberculosis is in an arrested stage. This would still mean that he must limit his working hours, rest a great deal, and take long vacations, in order to prevent a recurrence.
 2. His life expectancy is probably not much more than five years.
- IV. Mao, however, appears to have chosen Lin to be his successor in spite of Lin's frailty. We think this must reflect Mao's growing mistrust of other elements of the leadership.
- A. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the recent changes has been the break-up of the group of leaders which had been running the party machinery for the past decade.
1. Liu Shao-chi was the leading member of that group.

2. The General Secretary of the Party, Teng Hsiao-ping, is another leading member of that group. He has been weakened, but not as much as Liu.
 3. A couple of months ago, in fact, Teng appeared to have gained in the shake-up. All that has changed. Teng is still in the inner circle of Mao's advisors, but he has slipped from third or fourth place to sixth place in the power structure.
- B. In place of the party leaders, military leaders close to Lin, and government figures like Chou En-lai, have risen in importance.
- V. For many years now, it had appeared to us that the leaders of the party machinery--men like Liu Shao-chi--enjoyed Mao's full trust.
- A. They not only had a long record of personal loyalty to Mao; their radical approach was also in accord with his.
- B. This situation presents us with a puzzling contradiction, especially in regard to its policy implications:

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1. Mao is apparently intent on pushing through a radical program to reshape Chinese society. It appears to be so radical that the party rank-and-file could not be trusted to carry it out. The Red Guard had to be created.
2. There is, therefore, no satisfactory explanation for Mao's willingness to turn against his old comrades who appeared to share his radical views.
3. The government administrators and economic specialists who have been retained or even promoted--men like Chou En-lai, Chen Yun, and Li Fu-chun--are the relatively moderate members of the politburo.
4. Yet these moderates are now the men who presumably will be helping Mao and Lin Piao to implement the radical program.

VI. As I have said, the situation appears to be highly unstable. The events of the past ten months must have intensified the antagonisms and mistrust among those leaders who have survived the purge.

S E C R E T

- A. The possibility has increased that when Mao finally does go, the succession will be disorderly, and marked by factional struggles and bloody purges.
- B. It is also far from clear whether or not the new leaders are going to institute any major changes in domestic or foreign policy.
- C. There has, however, been no change in the basic hard-line nature of the men at the top. As a result, we foresee no abrupt change in Peking's policy of implacable hostility toward the United States.

(FOREIGN POLICY)

- I. In general, the Peking leaders have been so pre-occupied with troubles at home that they have been marking time on foreign policy.

Vietnam

- II. On Vietnam, Peking continues to repeat its familiar hard line. At the same time, the Chinese are carefully avoiding any expansion of their commitment to help the North Vietnamese.

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- A. The first U. S. attacks on North Vietnam's POL storage facilities on June 29th provided a short-lived barrage of propaganda.
 - 1. Peking tried to convey the impression that China was more determined than ever to assist Hanoi in resisting this new escalation.
 - 2. But the Chinese declarations of "resolute support" for the Vietnamese did not exhibit the ring of enthusiasm that had marked similar statements on the subject a year ago. The emphasis was on self-reliance by the Vietnamese.
- B. Peking, however, appears to be just as determined as ever that the North Vietnamese must continue the war.
 - 1. After the September 7th meeting of the U.S. and Chinese Communist ambassadors in Warsaw, the Chinese Ambassador released a statement attacking what he called the "U.S. peace talks swindle." Ambassador Wang repeated that China would support Hanoi against the U. S. to the end.

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C. Those Chinese protests last week about recent violations of Chinese air space did not have any threats of counter-action. For all the bluster of Chinese propaganda, Peking's reaction to these incidents has been cautious.

Sino-Soviet Relations

III. The Sino-Soviet dispute has flared up again, but there is no indication that this marks a significant change in relations between the two countries.

A. Mass demonstrations by Red Guards outside the Soviet Embassy in Peking on August 29th and 30th were evidently intended as a reply to a Soviet diplomatic note delivered on August 26th which had protested earlier "acts of hooliganism" committed by the Red Guards in the vicinity of the embassy.

1. The Chinese took care, however, to prevent the thousands of people who took part in the demonstrations from getting out of hand and damaging the Soviet Embassy.

2. This suggests Peking is not willing to push the Soviets too far.

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B. Peking's most recent blast at Moscow was a People's Daily article on September 8th, which accused Moscow of collaborating with the U. S. to "sell out the Vietnamese."

1. The article called the Soviets "renegades," "termites of the working class," and "scum in the revolutionary ranks."

C. Moscow has maintained a general posture of restraint, but the Soviet press is quoting liberally from criticism of China in the foreign Communist press. It has recently sharpened the tone of its own commentary on China.

1. In recent weeks, the Moscow papers have also re-printed some of the more extreme Chinese statements in connection with the Red Guard, to let the teen-age antics speak for themselves.

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20 September 1966

MAHON BRIEFING

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

- I. Today is a good time to take a look at the situation in the Dominican Republic.
 - A. The last US troops--the rear guard of the Inter-American Peace Force--are scheduled to leave for home today.
 - B. From here on, the government of President Joaquin Balaguer is on its own.
- II. There seems to be no immediate challenge to the regime's authority. There is also, however, no promise that Balaguer can establish a strong or stable footing over the next six months or so.
 - A. Many of the Dominican military are presently sympathetic to Balaguer.
 - B. Nevertheless, the President is conscious of the need to consolidate his hold on the armed forces.

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1. He is trying to curb the power of potential dissidents through a military reorganization plan.
2. On September 17th he fired the head of the air force. The new air force chief is just as conservative as the man who was fired, but he has pledged loyalty to the President.

III. So far, Juan Bosch and his left-of-center Dominican Revolutionary Party have been relatively restrained in their opposition.

A. Relations between Bosch and Balaguer could easily become estranged.

1. Balaguer has already demonstrated a strong sensitivity to criticism from Bosch.

IV. The withdrawal of the Peace Force will probably lead to a step-up in terrorism and agitation by the extreme left.

- A. The three Communist parties, however, remain divided.
- B. The Communists constitute a serious problem for Balaguer, but unless they make common cause with non-Communists, they will not pose a major threat to stability.

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V. Severe economic problems confront the government.

A. The government has been slow in launching a \$40-million, US-financed investment program, designed to reduce widespread unemployment.

B. An acute balance of payments problem confronts the government. This will require unpopular austerity measures.

LATIN-AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Finally, if you gentlemen have the time, I have a series of brief notes on some of the hot spots in Latin America;

THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

I. In February 1967, six British Caribbean territories (Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada) will assume a virtually independent "Associated Status" relationship with Great Britain. The US Consul General in Barbados is concerned that this rapid British withdrawal may leave a political vacuum on the islands.

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- II. Barbados receives its independence from Great Britain on November 30th this year; the date for elections has yet to be announced.
- III. General elections are scheduled to be held in Trinidad and Tobago on November 7th with all indications pointing to victory for the moderate government of Prime Minister Eric Williams and his People's National Movement (PNM).
- IV. In Jamaica, where general elections will probably take place in the spring of 1967, a horse race is expected between the ruling Jamaica Labor Party of Prime Minister Bustamante, and the opposition People's National Party.

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CUBA

I. Fidel Castro has resumed his normally active role in Cuba, following a period of relative inactivity late last spring; his power position, based on tight security controls and the loyalty of his key military and security officials, remains strong.

A. Castro is worried about the continued failure of his regime to overcome the many critical economic and administrative problems on the island.

1. His increasingly bellicose actions and statements during the last nine months probably result from personal frustration over these problems.

B. Castro dwelt at some length on the revolution's shortcomings in a bluntly worded speech on 29 August.

II. Our special Cuba Team which checks out all reports of nuclear weapons in Cuba continues to conclude that there are no such weapons or delivery systems on the island.

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PANAMA

I. Panama's President Robles, in public and private conversations, continues to voice optimism over the canal treaty, despite many problems still facing the US and Panamanian negotiators.

A. Robles' recent statements, in which he indicated the talks were "going well," probably are aimed at blunting the inevitable barrage of opposition criticism that will accompany the opening of the National Assembly on October first.

B. Communist-led students and opposition groups will try to stir up trouble at the opening session of the Assembly; national holidays on November 3rd, 4th and 5th are also dates when the students traditionally clash with government security forces and stage anti-US demonstrations.

ARGENTINA

I. The Argentine government, under President Juan Carlos Ongania, is making slow progress in instituting the reforms which impelled the military to oust the Illia government on June 27th.

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- A. The regime's revolutionary momentum has been slowed by Ongania's methodical, deliberate pace and by strong criticism of his government's takeover of the country's eight national universities.
 - 1. This involved get-tough methods with students and professors who protested the move.
 - B. The government seems to be firmly in the saddle at the moment, but a few potential storm warnings are up.
 - 1. Chief of these is the indication that some of Ongania's key military backers are beginning to squabble over policy, and jockey for power.

BRAZIL

- I. The Brazilian legislature looks 99-percent certain to elect Marshal Arthur Costa e Silva as Brazil's next president on October 3.
 - A. With that, Brazil will enter an interregnum period which will be marked by political turbulence and not much forward progress.

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- B. President Castello Branco, who is due to leave office on 15 March 1967, plans to make the overhaul of the 1946 Constitution his last major project, but pulling and hauling over this project as well as maneuvering for the November 15th direct elections of the new congress may keep political tensions high.
- C. A stubbornly high rate of increase in the cost of living, and growing student and labor opposition to the government, also promise to keep giving both the old and the new president many headaches.

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ECUADOR

- I. In Ecuador, economic and political instability continue to plague the interim government of President Yerovi, and may lead to the postponement of the Constituent Assembly.
 - A. This body now is scheduled to be elected on October 16 and to convene on November third.
 - B. Antigovernment plotting is being carried on by at least five disparate groups--composed mostly of corrupt opportunists with little popular support.
 - C. Reports of preparations for a pre-emptive coup by military leaders add to the general public's disrespect for the government and lack of hope for the future.
 - D. Economic problems, stemming from a chronic shortage of funds, defy short-term solution and will be a continual embarrassment to the interim government and its successor.

URUGUAY

- I. The political temperature in Uruguay is rising as the country approaches the November 27th national elections, when voters will not only choose a new government but will also vote on four separate constitutional reform proposals.

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- A. The one with the best chance of success is a bipartisan proposal that would change the present nine-man executive to a presidential system of government, but it is far from certain that the proposal will gain enough votes to pass.
1. The Uruguayan Communist Party, through its virtual control of organized labor, is working against this proposal by staging work stoppages.
 2. Further agitation can be expected in the pre-election period.
- B. If popular demands for constitutional reform are not met, Uruguay could be in for a period of serious political and economic instability.

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GUYANA

- I. In Guyana, a new outbreak of squabbling is once more threatening to break up the political marriage of convenience between Prime Minister Burnham and Finance Minister D'Aguiar.
- A. We think the Burnham government probably would hang on even if D'Aguiar should leave the government, but it would sorely miss D'Aguiar's practicality and insistence on fiscal integrity.
- B. A split in the governing coalition also undoubtedly would give Marxist Cheddi Jagan and his friends a handy political weapon to use against Burnham.
- C. It could prove especially dangerous if it comes soon after all remaining British troops leave Guyana on October 31.

GUATEMALA

- I. Guatemalan President Mendez has appealed for unity and peace, but extremists on both the left and right are engaging in terrorist tactics.
- A. Continued assassinations of rightists by the Communist action group FAR has led far rightists to arm, and to plan vendetta

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murders of Communists and their sympathizers.

- B. Several clandestine sources have reported growing unrest in the military over the alleged inaction of the president and the minister of defense.

HONDURAS

- I. In Honduras, President Oswaldo Lopez' ineptitude, his lack of accomplishment, and his allowance of excessive power in the hands of Minister of the Presidency Ricardo Zuniga are breeding discontent.
 - A. The opposition Liberal Party is plotting the overthrow of the government and has the support of at least one military zone commander.
 - B. Restiveness in the military is growing, particularly over Zuniga's interference in their affairs. Rumors are circulating that a coup attempt will be made when the president is visiting Mexico in late October.
 - C. There is no evidence, however, that military support for an overthrow is sufficient to be serious.

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